

LONDON BURIAL-GROUND PRACTICES.

Sir.—You did me the honour to insert a communication in *THE BUILDER* of February 6, on "Spafields Burial-ground," and observing in your journal of the 15th inst., that a person, signing himself "A. Bird," and who calls himself "Manager" (I presume of the grave-yard bearing the above name), has thought fit, not only to venture an attempt to invalidate my statements, but has dared even publicly to question my right to make them. I will trouble you, Sir, with the following additional remarks, premising that I do not retract a single word of my former communication, whilst I hurl the most uncompromising defiance at Mr. A. Bird, the "management," and the "proceedings about to be commenced." As Mr. Bird states only in general terms his determination to commence "proceedings," as he assumes, nay, apparently has, in his own belief, long occupied the position of an ill-used and injured man,* I, pending his legal proceedings, in disclaiming any personal motive in the contest he has chosen to enter upon, invite Mr. Bird's most serious attention to the observations and statements I may deem it necessary to make, reminding him that, under any circumstances, the public have a far deeper and more important interest in this question than individual disputants—and that grave-yard PROPRIETARY INTERESTS, of the nature of those represented by their, for aught I know, self-elected champion, Mr. A. Bird, like other interests, must submit their claims, it may be, reveal their condition, to, and abide by the decision of, PUBLIC OPINION, represented by a free, a vigilant, and an independent press.

From a very long conviction, based on no slight grounds, I have from time to time, as the occasion offered, of opportunity served, endeavoured to convince my countrymen of the folly and wickedness of tacitly permitting the continuance of our present system of BURIAL IN TOWNS; and having, I think, abundantly proved that this iniquitous and pernicious practice has prostrated, and will continue to prostrate, numberless victims, I call upon the readers of your journal to apply their most serious consideration to this question; assuring them that it will afford them abundant material for salutary contemplation, and, if I mistake not, will supply a most powerful incentive to energetic and determined, and united action.

In the mixed condition of society in all large towns, it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation between the various classes, neither is it necessary to attempt to apportion to each individual his own share of inevitable, well-deserved punishment attendant upon his neglect of the first dictates of natural feelings and common sense; but it especially concerns the middle and poorer classes to reflect that circumstances, frequently inseparable from their condition, compel their residence in localities principally the seats of abominably-overcharged burying-grounds; that it is an indispensable condition of healthy existence that the atmosphere they breathe shall be in a pure condition; that in the immediate neighbourhood of, and even at a considerable distance from, all such places, annoyance, discomfort, disease, and death, are the invariable and abiding concomitants; that the locality, the area, the condition of the soil, the numbers buried in a given period, the depth at which bodies are interred, the constant upturning of earth yet reeking with human corruption, and the opportunities afforded by free ventilation for the dissipation of the invariably injurious products of human decomposition,—that these circumstances must and do influence the sanitary condition, most certainly, of the surrounding residents, and even the health of the entire district.

Sir, these statements, which I unhesitatingly make, are true or false. Perhaps Mr. Bird, whilst arranging his counter-statements to disprove my allegations, will favour your readers

with his opinions, as I understand that he entertains some original notions on the burying-ground question. I do not wish to press unnecessarily upon Mr. Bird, but the course he has thought proper to pursue is so little in accordance with irrefragable facts, that I beg to assure him, and all whom it may concern, that he or they must convict, or be convicted, for I will neither offer nor accept a compromise; meanwhile I publicly ask Mr. Bird for distinct and unequivocal answers to the following questions:—

1st. What is the area of your burying-ground?

2nd. How long has it been employed for the interment of the dead?

3rd. How deep are the graves dug?

4th. How many bodies are placed in one grave in a given period of time?

5th. What depth of earth is ordinarily placed over the topmost coffin?

6th. What lateral thickness of earth is allowed between each grave?

7th. How many bodies on an average have you interred on Sundays, and how many on the remaining days of the week, since you became "manager?"

8th. Why do you constantly keep from five to fifteen graves open in expectancy, and do you consider the practice of keeping "open graves" injurious to the health of the district?

9th. As the soil of Spafields, burying-ground is in a peculiar condition, I believe from the mode of "management" adopted, in how short a period, in your experience, do the soft parts of the human body resolve themselves into their ultimate elements?

10th. How long do the coffins remain entire or undecayed?

11th, and lastly. Do you persist in reiterating your assertion, reported in the *Times* of Dec. 23, 1843, "that the statement" (a memorial on the condition of your burying-ground, from some of the surrounding inhabitants) "was altogether false;" and do you now express your "surprise that any respectable newspaper could give insertion for matter destitute of foundation and so unsupported by proof?"

I am, Sir, &c.

GEORGE ALFRED WALKER.

11, St. James's-place, St. James's-street,
Feb. 19th, 1845.

WORKS IN THE PROVINCES.

At Brighton a great improvement is about to be effected by widening of the King's Road, and putting back of the battery. The width of the present road (about 40 feet) is to be doubled by means of a sea-wall which will connect the eastern marine promenade with the western. In the immediate vicinity of the battery this width will be much increased by the present site of the battery being thrown into the road. The estimates amount to 14,000*l*. A subscription has been set afloat, and is proceeding most prosperously, for the erection of a fountain on the Steyne.

At Cirencester, the committee of the proposed Agricultural College have selected the design of Messrs. Dawkes and Hamilton, architects of Gloucester and Cheltenham, from a large number, among which were some from architects of eminence in London. The college will occupy the delightful site on Lord Bathurst's grounds known as Port-farm, near the railway station at the junction of the Stroud and Tetbury roads, thus presenting a perspective of two bold fronts. The design is in the Tudor style, of three stories high; the upper story being lit by picturesque old-fashioned dormer windows, of the style prevalent among the collegiate buildings of Oxford. The centre is occupied by a tower, the upper part of which is intended to form an observatory for meteorological and other scientific purposes. At the Privy Council held on Tuesday week, her Majesty was pleased to approve of the grant of a charter of incorporation of the subscribers to this important institution.

At Manchester the subscriptions for public parks, &c., amounted, at the close of last week, to more than 30,000*l*. It is highly gratifying to find that a sum has been thus obtained, which promises, at all events, that the first steps in this important measure of public health and recreation shall be taken on a scale worthy of

the extent and importance of this vast hive of industry. The subscription is equivalent to one of 2*s*. each from every man, woman, and child in the community, assuming the population to be 300,000.

At Romford a new corn Exchange is about to be erected. Two premiums are at the present time advertised for the two best designs to be sent in by the 1st proximo.

At Harrow, a very handsome subscription has been raised for the purpose of re-building the head master's boarding-house, which was destroyed by fire in the year 1838. Further means being requisite for the attainment of the object in view, the committee have publicly solicited the assistance of *Old Harrowians*.

At Liverpool the stock-brokers and shareholders have determined on building a new and splendid Stock Exchange. The subscription, which was but recently opened, has augmented most rapidly, and the list now amounts to 50,000*l*.; one sharebroker alone subscribed 4,000*l*.

At Carnarvon, the fine old castle which has been for some time in a dilapidated state, is by order of the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests, to be put in complete repair.

At or near Stratton St. Margaret's, Wiltshire, the guardians of the Highworth and Swindon Union have resolved on building a new union workhouse.

At Coventry, land has been purchased for a cemetery, and it is the intention of the town council to complete the work, so essential to the health as well as to the feelings of the inhabitants, without delay.

The province of Ulster, will, ere long, possess a college for the education of the future ministry of the Presbyterian Church. The contributions towards the building of the new college are proceeding most satisfactorily. Already from forty-two contributors a sum of 2,500*l*. has been realized, besides 500*l*. more in smaller sums, making in all 3,000*l*. Concurrently with this movement, a deputation is at present in London, to solicit from her Majesty's government an endowment for the proposed college.

At Huntingdon, Lady Olivia Sparrow has purchased the theatre for the purpose of converting it into a chapel of ease. The *Globe* states, that an eminent architect is to be engaged to effect the necessary alterations in the appearance and interior of the building, and the sanction of the bishop of the diocese will be obtained for its consecration. Funds will also be provided for the endowment of it, a considerable portion of which will be given by Lady Olivia.

The rage for building is now exhibiting itself in the neighbourhood of Stratford. Between three and four hundred houses are being erected on a farm, recently in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Spence. On Wanstead Park, the like number of villas, besides various others on a minor scale, in other parts of these localities, will soon be in a habitable state.

INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

FEB. 11, 1845.—The President, Sir John Rennie, in the chair.

The first paper read was a description, by Mr. Thomas Hughes, As-soc. of the method employed for draining some banks of cuttings on the London and Croydon, and London and Birmingham Railways, also a part of the retaining wall of the Euston inclined plane. The method adopted was the introduction of Watson's drain-pipes, which were made of the iron-stone clay of Staffordshire; their surface is pierced with numerous apertures, small externally, and enlarging inwardly, which form prevents their being clogged by the earth, and allows whatever enters to pass freely into the pipe. In their application on the London and Croydon Railway, a longitudinal trench, 4 feet deep, was dug on the crown of the bank, at a few feet from the edge, and other trenches, about 30 feet apart, descended from it to the open drain by the side of the permanent way. On the London and Birmingham Railway the descending trenches were 20 feet apart, and varied from 3 to 6 feet in depth; the pipes were introduced into these trenches, and the clay which had been dug out was then laid over the pipes; from the longitudinal line of pipes, upright pipes were occa-

* *Citizens' wall*.—Yesterday a respectable-looking man, who stated that he was the manager of the burial-ground at Spafields (Chapel), came before the magistrate to complain of a report from that court in the newspapers of that morning relating to that burial-ground. He declared the statement which appeared was altogether false, and expressed his surprise that any respectable newspaper could give insertion to matter destitute of foundation and so unsupported by proof.

The applicant said it was very hard that such a report should remain uncontradicted. He would certainly push the matter further.—*Times*, December 22nd, 1843.

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